

## Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PEKING 01603 160102Z

64

ACTION EA-09

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03

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FM USLO PEKING

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6200

INFO AMEMBASSY SINGAPORE

AMEMBASSY TAIPEI

AMEMBASSY TOKYO

AMCONSUL HONG KONG

CINCPAC FOR POLAD

C O N F I D E N T I A L PEKING 1603

E.O.11652: GDS

TAGS: PINT CH

SUBJECT: POLITICAL SIDE OF THE PRC EARTHQUAKE RELIEF EFFORT

1. SUMMARY: MASSIVE PUBLICITY TO EARTHQUAKE RELIEF EFFORTS IN HOPEI HAS BUILT UP THE DOMESTIC LEADERSHIP IMAGE OF HUA KUO-FENG. QUAKE ALSO RESULTED IN GREATER ATTENTION TO UNITY AND PRODUCTION AND SOME, PERHAPS ONLY TEMPORARY, DAMPENING OF THE ANTI-TENG CAMPAIGN. END SUMMARY.

2. IN CONTRAST TO ITS TREATMENT OF THE LIAONING EARTHQUAKE IN FEBRUARY 1975, THE PRC HAS MASSIVELY PUBLICIZED ITS RESPONSE TO THE JULY 28 EARTHQUAKE. THIS PUBLICITY HAS FEATURED THE CENTRAL COMFORT TEAM HEADED BY PREMIER HUA KUO-FENG, HEROIC ACTIONS IN THE EARTHQUAKE AREA ITSELF, AND SUPPORT EFFORTS THROUGHOUT CHINA. FOR A TIME IT PUT THE ANTI-TENG CAMPAIGN IN A SECONDARY POSITION.

3. ARTICLES AND PHOTOGRAPHS IN PEKING'S MAJOR NEWSPAPERS, AS WELL AS RADIO AND TELEVISION BROADCASTS, HAVE FEATURED

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PEKING 01603 160102Z

TURED HUA KUO-FENG'S ACTIVITIES AS HEAD OF THE COMFORT

TEAM (AND THOSE OF DEPUTY LEADER CHEN YUNG-KUEI). THE IMPRESSION HAS BEEN OF A LEADER WHO IS VERY MUCH IN CHARGE AND WHO IS CONCERNED ABOUT HIS PEOPLE. HE HAS HAD SCANT COMPETITION FOR THE LIMELIGHT FROM OTHER PEKING-BASED POLITBURO MEMBERS, INCLUDING WANG HUNG-WEN AND CHIANG CHING, WHO BOTH "SAW OFF" THE COMFORT TEAM, AND YAO WEN-YUAN WHO RECEIVED A BRAZILIAN JOURNALISTS DELEGATION.

4. THE BUILDUP OF HUA IS PAIRED WITH THE IMPRESSION OF AN ADMINISTRATION THAT IS FULLY EQUAL TO THE CHALLENGE OF A MAJOR DISASTER; THAT CAN, IN SHORT, DO SOMETHING BESIDES RUN DIVISIVE POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS. SEVERAL OTHER THEMES APPARENT IN THE EARTHQUAKE RELIEF PROPAGANDA FIT THE SAME GENERAL PICTURE. ONE IS THE CALL TO UNIFY TO OVERCOME DISASTER. ANOTHER IS THE HEROIC ROLE OF THE PLA IN RUSHING IN TO SERVE WHERE NEEDED. ANOTHER, THE HEROISM AND SELFLESSNESS OF LEADING CADRES IN THE EARTHQUAKE AFFECTED AREAS. PRODUCTION IS ALSO GIVEN HEAVY EMPHASIS, PARTICULARLY THE NEED TO RESTORE PRODUCTION IN THE AFFECTED AREAS AND TO HAVE UNITS OUTSIDE THESE AREAS MAKE UP FOR PRODUCTION LOSSES.

5. THESE THEMES ALL SEEM NATURAL ENOUGH IN THE CIRCUMSTANCES, AND IT IS HARD FOR US TO SEE HOW EVEN THE MOST RIGID IDEOLOGUE COULD FIND FAULT WITH THEM, UP TO A POINT. OF COURSE THEMES FROM THE CRITICIZE TENG CAMPAIGN HAVE ALSO BEEN WORKED IN. FOR EXAMPLE, THE SELFLESSNESS (OR SELF-RESTRAINT) SHOWN BY VARIOUS INDIVIDUALS AND UNITS IN RESPONDING TO THE DISASTER HAS BEEN CITED AS REFUTING TENG'S ALLEGED ARGUMENTS ON THE NEED FOR MATERIAL INCENTIVES.

6. YET THE EARTHQUAKE'S AND RELIEF EFFORT'S EFFECT OF DIVERTING ATTENTION FROM IDEOLOGICAL CONCERNS WHILE PLACING A PREMIUM ON PERFORMANCE PROBABLY HAS PLAYED INTO THE HANDS OF THOSE FORCES WHO HAVE BEEN TRYING FOR MONTHS TO CONTAIN OR ATTENUATE THE ANTI-TENG CAMPAIGN. AT LOWER LEVELS IT PROVIDES WHAT SEEMS AN EXCELLENT OPPORTUNITY FOR IDEOLOGICALLY SUSPECT

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PEKING 01603 160102Z

CADRE TO TRY TO EMPLOY THE MAO FORMULA IN THE JULY 1 EDITORIAL AND CLEANSE THEMSELVES OF "BOURGEOIS" AND "BLOODSUCKER" IDENTITY BY JOINING WHOLEHEARTEDLY WITH WORKERS IN THE RELIEF AND RECONSTRUCTION EFFORT.

7. THIS EFFECT IS OBVIOUSLY NOT PLEASING TO EVERYONE, AND IT APPEARS TO HAVE OCCASIONED SOME DEBATE. THE AUGUST 11 PEOPLE'S DAILY EDITORIAL NOTES THAT "CHIEFTAINS

OF THE OPPORTUNIST LINE IN THE PARTY ALWAYS TRY TO TAKE ADVANTAGE OF TEMPORARY CALAMITIES TO DIVERT THE REVOLUTION FROM ITS COURSE AND RESTORE CAPITALISM". IT WARNS AGAINST REPEATING THE EXPERIENCE OF THE EARLY 1960'S WHEN TENG, LIU SHAO-CHI "AND COMPANY" USED NATURAL CALAMITIES AS AN EXCUSE TO INTRODUCE POLICIES CONTRARY TO MAO'S LINE (REF A). WE ASSUME THAT FOR THE MOMENT THESE CAUTIONS ARE ADDRESSED PRIMARILY TO PRODUCTION CADRE AND TO WORKERS. BUT IF THE QUAKE'S COSTS TO THE ECONOMY ARE AS SERIOUS AS THEY SEEM THE ISSUE OF HOW TO SUSTAIN COMPENSATORY HIGHER PRODUCTION LEVELS COULD ALREADY BE THE SUBJECT OF SOUL-SEARCHING BY BOTH NATIONAL AND PROVINCIAL LEADERS.

8. IT WOULD BE RASH AND PROBABLY WRONG TO SURMISE THAT HUA KUO-FENG IS HIMSELF TRYING TO DERAIL THE CURRENT POLITICAL CAMPAIGN. IT NEVERTHELESS SEEMS THAT HUA, WHILE SAYING THE RIGHT THINGS ABOUT THE CAMPAIGN (PEKING 1592), IS MAKING GOOD USE OF THIS OPPORTUNITY TO ASSOCIATE HIMSELF AT THE SAME TIME WITH MORE POSITIVE THEMES WITH TRULY NATIONAL APPEAL. HE IS A LONG WAY FROM ACHIEVING THE IMAGE AND STATURE OF CHOU EN-LAI AS PROTECTOR OF THE PEOPLE'S INTERESTS, BUT HE HAS TAKEN A STEP IN THE RIGHT DIRECTION. HUA'S IMAGE WILL BE ENHANCED ALL THE MORE IF, AS APPEARS LIKELY, HE IS PERSONALLY DIRECTING THE RELIEF EFFORT. AND IN DOING THAT, HE WOULD ALSO HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO STRENGTHEN HIS PERSONAL TIES TO A VARIETY OF PARTY, GOVERNMENT, AND ARMY LEADERS INVOLVED IN THE EFFORT (INCLUDING, ALMOST INEVITABLY, SOME WHOM THE LEFT HAS MARKED "CAPITALIST ROADERS").

GATES

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## Message Attributes

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**Channel Indicators:** n/a  
**Current Classification:** UNCLASSIFIED  
**Concepts:** POLICIES, EARTHQUAKES, NATURAL DISASTERS, POLITICAL SITUATION  
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**Copy:** SINGLE  
**Draft Date:** 14 AUG 1976  
**Decaption Date:** 01 JAN 1960  
**Decaption Note:**  
**Disposition Action:** RELEASED  
**Disposition Approved on Date:**  
**Disposition Authority:** ElyME  
**Disposition Case Number:** n/a  
**Disposition Comment:** 25 YEAR REVIEW  
**Disposition Date:** 28 MAY 2004  
**Disposition Event:**  
**Disposition History:** n/a  
**Disposition Reason:**  
**Disposition Remarks:**  
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**Reference:** n/a  
**Review Action:** RELEASED, APPROVED  
**Review Authority:** ElyME  
**Review Comment:** n/a  
**Review Content Flags:**  
**Review Date:** 21 MAY 2004  
**Review Event:**  
**Review Exemptions:** n/a  
**Review History:** RELEASED <21 MAY 2004 by ShawDG>; APPROVED <17 SEP 2004 by ElyME>  
**Review Markings:**

Margaret P. Grafeld  
Declassified/Released  
US Department of State  
EO Systematic Review  
04 MAY 2006

**Review Media Identifier:**  
**Review Referrals:** n/a  
**Review Release Date:** n/a  
**Review Release Event:** n/a  
**Review Transfer Date:**  
**Review Withdrawn Fields:** n/a  
**Secure:** OPEN  
**Status:** NATIVE  
**Subject:** POLITICAL SIDE OF THE PRC EARTHQUAKE RELIEF EFFORT  
**TAGS:** PINT, SENV, CH  
**To:** STATE  
**Type:** TE  
**Markings:** Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006